

**Stranger Things
Armageddon**



ICARUS

Armageddon Book 6: Icarus - The Legacy of Dr Brenner by **inktopia**

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Summary: [Prequel to ST] Dr. Martin Brenner was the kind of man who always reached his goals at any cost. So, when the CIA picked up a possible leak from MKUltra, they asked their best scientist to crack the code. Little did they know that this man would one day raise Eleven to become an unstoppable weapon, and when they did find out, it was already too late to save the world. [In Progress]

Armageddon Book 6: Icarus - The Legacy of Dr Brenner

Icarus:\Ch1 - A Mother's Love

"And this is how the world ends."

The old man raised his arms towards the sky and roared loudly, his voice echoing with grim premonition, perhaps to emphasize the ending of this story, or maybe to get a response from his audience. He had only two.

A small boy was sitting in front of him in the arms of an old woman and listening to the narrative with wide eyes. He fearfully clutched his grandmother's hand and asked, "When do the heroes come?"

"Ah. So, you know the story?" The old man winked at his grandson and bent over to whisper in his ear.

Suddenly, there was a screeching noise from the back of the garden where the three of them were sitting together. With a jump, the young boy freed himself from his grandmother's arms and ran towards the entrance. "Papa's back, Mama's back." Laughing, he ran towards the gate alone, his grandparents unable to keep up with his youthfulness.

Before the kid could stop running, the door at the other end of the garden opened, and a tall man and a shorter woman walked in together, both dressed in white lab coats. A silver streak ran down the man's hair, hinting at his age though the sharp eyes deceived the notion. Beside him, a younger woman with auburn hair and a broad smile on her face, bent down and spread her arms as the young boy crashed into them.

"And how's my little boy?"

"I'm fine. Mama.."

"Grandpa and Grandma?" The man asked.

"We're fine, Martin." The elderly couple walked in the view, the old man taking the help of his wife to cover the distance.

The man standing near the door, named Martin, walked towards them, and after reaching, started conversing in a hushed tone, "Any episodes today?"

"None. He was too excited with the stories to fall asleep."

Martin sighed in relief. "Another day, another escape. Wonder how

long before they found out?"

"I believe we're getting close. Happiness seems to be the key," the old man replied, watching his grandson as the young boy kept playing with his mother, bright smiles beaming on both of their faces.

Martin also watched the scene but grimaced instead. He uttered, "We're getting reports of more anomalies from across the country. There's one kid who can bend spoons with his mind. Back in Louisiana, a young girl made a sinkhole and sunk a car hundreds of feet into the earth."

"Any clues about what brought these changes?"

"We're still not sure. A new patient is coming in tomorrow who gets nightmares as well. Maybe she can help." Martin sounded hopeful yet solemn.

The old man leaned on his son as his wife relieved herself and walked towards the gate.

"What's her name?"

"Teresa Ives, she lives right around the corner."

It was morning in a sleepy town someplace in Indiana, United States of America. The small suburb had just woken up from its slumber. Here and there, steel shutters of neighborhood shops were going up with loud metallic groans as the storekeepers prepared for commerce, it was perhaps only an hour until the crowds started arriving in droves.

At the corner of a crossroad, a plump woman hung a sign on the door of a small shop that said; *'It's Brew Time.'* A short time later, a sedan banked the curve and came to a stop in front of the shop. The door on the driver's side opened, and a man in his middle ages climbed out and read the sign on top; *Elma's cafe*. He briskly walked inside.

Though it was early morning, the newly installed electric stoves inside the kitchen were already heating up pots filled with coffee, and the pans had fresh bacon and sausages on them. An addictive aroma filled the small cafe.

The man went to the counter and ordered coffee and breakfast. Then he walked to a table where the only other customer was waiting, and after a brief exchange of greetings, took the opposite seat.

"Odd place to meet." Dr. Sam Owens eyed the cafe and looked at his host.

"You have to hit the ground running, else you'll lose the race even before it starts."

"You know, Martin, when I was given this assignment, I never imagined that I'd get to hear those words again, of all place here... in the middle of nowhere."

Dr. Martin Brenner from Hawkins National Laboratories laughed, "Same here, old friend. How long has it been since med school? A decade?"

"More than that, Martin. I wonder what you have been up to all these years." Owens paused as the waitress lowered a pot of freshly brewed coffee and a plate of burger and fries on the table. Then she smiled at the patrons and left.

"What do you know about the human mind?" Martin asked his friend in response.

The coffee never reached their lips.

Two days later, on a solemn summer afternoon, the same sedan gently rolled down a dusty road made of gravels and stopped in front of a tall wired gate flanked on both sides by barriers made of wire mesh. The signboard declaring the name of the facility - *Hawkins National Laboratories*, was hanging on the gate while various other warning signs lined along the fence marked the area beyond the reach of the public. Which was peculiar because this small building that was situated beyond the edge of the town, was apparently, a power station. It was far away from the town and covered in all sides by a thick forest, people wouldn't walk up to here quite often.

After checking the card, the security guard pinged the central operator who opened the gate with an electronic signal from somewhere deep within the facility. The two frames swung open in wide arcs, missing the front fenders of the car by a fraction of an inch.

"Here you go, Dr. Owens." The guard handed the doctor his ID and pointed towards the main building. The engines started, and then the car rolled down the path. Before the outside gates could close, the vehicle reached the main entrance and Owens climbed out. But he did not need to walk all the way to the main door to ring the bell. It slid open on its own, and Martin walked out with a big smile on his face.

"Welcome to Neverland, Sam."

"It's smaller than I thought."

"Looks can be deceiving, my friend." Martin laughed and ushered Owens inside.

Sometime later, the metallic doors of an industrial elevator sliced open vertically, and the two scientists walked out into a gloomy rectangular corridor made of concrete. There were a few weak lamps placed at the corners, and they could do only so much when it came to lighting the deep cavern.

Owens observed his surroundings - *"The whole thing's at least a mile underground. What kind of experiments are they running here?"* He wondered as the two of them walked towards the other end.

It was a short walk through a few guarded doors after which they reached a room with a glowing sign. "MKUltra" - Owens read the name and frowned though Martin had exposed the secret back in the cafe. As far as Owens was concerned, the near-derelict project was researching the effects of psychedelic drugs on the human mind, but what Martin had told him was far fetched even compared to the top-secret experiments that the US government was running elsewhere, perhaps only the Russian reports could keep up.

So, somewhere down the line, MKUltra's direction was changed, but what brought the change, and to what extent? He pondered as he walked into a small hallway with halogens shining brightly from the ceiling, a stark contrast to the gloom outside but the unfamiliar sense of dread was lingering here as well.

This semicircular room was some kind of central chamber with two doors carved on the walls on each side. Martin walked to the one on the left and opened it. Inside the bleak room illuminated by a single white ceiling lamp, a young woman was sitting on a small chair. She was stooping, and her features were hidden by the shadow projected by her forehead, *or was it fear under her eyes that tried to hide her face from the outside world?* Owens would need to dig deep to find the answers to his questions.

"Meet Teresa, the patient I was talking about."

"Oh!" Owens recalled the meeting in the cafe and forced a smile on his face as he shook her hand. "I'm Dr. Owens, and I'll be taking your case."

The woman named Teresa looked up and smiled at the doctor, "Nice

to meet you doc. I'm Teresa Ives."

She had a stern yet cheerful face with bright eyes, surrounded by a headful of dirty golden hair. Then there was something else. Others might not have noticed and mistaken Terry's smile for her happiness, but the creases around her sunken eyes didn't escape the sight of the veteran physician. It was pretty evident that she was under severe duress, and if the reports were to be believed, then it was not only from her pregnancy. Some strange nightmares were eating away her rationality. Of course, it was nothing that the CIA should have been concerned about, but in this age of paranoia and conspiracies, every bit of information was drilled to its very core, and when the name of their top secret research project came up, the analysts promptly lost their sleep.

Owens would've preferred spending a day to get to know his patient, but after an hour or two, he closed his notebook and placed it on the table with a profound sigh. It was completely useless. Teresa Ives was the commonest of the common women living a typical life in the American suburb. Born and brought up in the state, educated right here though her teens, then wild adventure-filled years followed by settling down in a place far away from her past. Typical, yet, the reports were a bit, *extraordinary*.

"How long have you been having these... dreams?"

Terry replied with a strained voice, "It's been a few months now."

Owens nodded. The patient had been getting nightmares ever since she was a few weeks into her pregnancy. Initially, the healthcare workers didn't pay much attention, but then one day, an attendant found something interesting. Terry's dreams were usually harmless, and she couldn't remember most of them after waking up, except the few times she recalled a name and wrote it down on a piece of paper on the following morning. The curious attendant had spent hours crouching over a telephone directory and found all the names; most of them were real and the only complete group of them lived together in Hawkins, Indiana, only a short distance away from the city. *Maybe the patient knew them?* The attendant had filed the report and closed the case promptly.

Then there was no activity for some time until one of the names

triggered a CIA advanced warning system in Atlanta. A day later, the entire case file was transferred to Hawkins National Laboratory, which was the front of a CIA backed dark-ops research facility situated in the very town where most people in Teresa's list lived, or were just born within the span of years. That couldn't have been just a coincidence, the government had figured. But there were more.

Scott Clarke, a young college student, living with his mother at the edge of the town. What could he have in common with Nancy Wheeler, a young girl who had just started kindergarten a few weeks ago? *How were the dreams connected?* That was the question that had started the new program, Martin explained to his colleague as they walked towards the counseling rooms. Teresa was being pushed in a wheelchair by Owens. From this vantage point, he couldn't see her face directly but could catch faint glimpses from the reflections on the glass panels on the doors around them. She flinched every time the word; *dream*, came up in the conversation.

Martin answered a few more questions on the way. Even if they considered the possibility that Terry Ives was pulling a prank, they couldn't ignore the fact that a few names on the list were top secret. In fact, it was the word, '*MKUltra*' that brought the attention of the lab on Mrs. Ives, and she was invited to the location a few weeks ago.

They reached the designated room and went inside. Martin helped Owens to set her up and then left the place to make arrangements for the next experiment.

"Tell me, Mrs. Ives..." Owens sat down in front of his patient and began conversing in a comforting tone.

"Please call me Terry."

"Okay... Terry. Have you ever met these people?" Owens asked and indicated the names on an old crumpled list placed on the table.

Terry shook her head sideways. "No."

"But you remember these names?"

She nodded faintly. "Sometimes... I see the names when I wake up."

"But you don't remember the dream?"

"Just the feeling. If it's happy or if it's... *sad*."

With confusion, Owens looked at the chart, some of the names were written with a shaking hand, the stress evident from the crooked letters. The others were pretty straightforward. And a few names

were barely legible, like the name; *Benny*. Intel found a lone man who had just opened a diner at the edge of the forest near the lab. If these names were indeed indicative of a hidden agenda, then it was essential to know more about them.

Dr. Sam Owens wasn't a detective, in fact, he had never even seen a single police procedural show in his life let alone working for the CIA, but he was a trained Psychiatrist. And at that moment, his intuitions urged him to find a connection between all these people and Terry Ives, a pregnant woman from a different part of this country, as fast as possible. Perhaps it was the last chance to solve this mystery before some high ranking officer from the top decided to shut down the project and throw Terry Ives in a CIA interrogation center. And from the look of things, she needed as much help as possible before the nightmares took a heavy toll on her mind and body and also harmed the baby she was carrying.

"Can you tell me what was the saddest one you remember?"

Terry extended her arm and pointed towards a word that made Owens feel uneasy. *MKUltra* wasn't a word that brought pleasant memories to anyone who knew what it represented; the deepest and darkest secrets of the government that they didn't want anyone to find out, especially the human rights lawyers. But sitting here and hearing it from a patient from the same program, Owens couldn't help but feel a bit afraid for the young mother and her unborn child. He wanted to change the direction of the conversation quickly. "How about the happiest one?"

Teresa smiled faintly and extended her arm again, but before she could show the word, the door behind them opened with a loud screech.

"Dr. Owens? The chamber is ready." The researcher's voice coming from the back had a strange effect on the patient. She pulled her legs up and buried her head between her knees and started trembling in fear. "Not the tank again, anything but that place. So dark."

Owens started feeling doubtful about the program itself. He knew all about sensory deprivation tanks and how they helped people to focus on their subconscious and to remember their dreams. The treatment was often sufficient. But the other times they left scars on those who were suffering from claustrophobia, something not suitable for a

pregnant woman.

The researcher escorted Teresa to the tank and helped her climb inside onto a support panel. Nearby, in front of a green console, Martin was ticking a checklist after carefully reading the numbers one by one from a greenish display. Owens walked up to him and waited, all the while anxiously monitoring the tank where the researcher was now attaching electrical probes to Terry's arms and necks after strapping her to the support frame. A clear liquid was slowly filling into the tank from below. Terry was already half-submerged when the researcher finally attached a few needles hooked up to intravenous drips to her arms, and that raised Owens' eyebrows. There were a lot of restrictions placed on medicines that could or couldn't be given to pregnant women, and dark-ops facilities like these did not always keep their patients' best health in priority. Once the preparations were completed, the researcher pressed a button on the top, and Terry was wholly immersed in the fluid as the platform lowered. A long pipe carrying oxygen and the thin lines with the probes and the iv drips were the only attachments she had to the external world now. The tank sealed shut with a mechanical hum.

Martin finished the scan and spoke excitedly, "All the readings look normal. We're ready to dive."

"It doesn't create problems for her pregnancy?" Owens asked worriedly as the two panels lining the circular glass chamber closed, and Terry's fearful eyes flashed for the final time before being plunged into darkness.

'Starting iv drip one, two and three. Standby four.' A mechanical voice from the nearby PA system kept confirming each of the steps of the tightly controlled experiment. *'Starting drip four. Reducing temperature.'* "Her baby's fine. In fact, she's growing quite well," Martin replied confidently.

"How long does it take for her to fall asleep?"

"Right about now."

A green light on top of the console started blinking slowly. Owens calculated the time and almost shouted in disbelief, "What are you putting into her? No way a natural sedative works that fast."

Martin was too engrossed in the readings to recognize the fear in his

friend's voice. He replied casually, "Some LSD cocktail."

"LSD?"

"Lysergic..."

"I know what god damn LSD means. You can't put that in a pregnant woman. It's never been tested for safety."

"It has worked so far." Martin replied and eagerly peered over the console as spikes started appearing in a smooth green line running through a circular dial. Owens realized that he had not been heard, so he yelled over the hum of the machines, "Shut it down, Martin!"

The heartbeat monitor on the right-side panel was way above the normal limits, it was now speeding faster than a racing cyclist. But it couldn't hold a candle to the brain activity monitor beeping loudly beside it. Owens couldn't remember the last time he had seen the number so high. He was sure that a neurologist would be prepping for seizures by now.

"Martin? SHUT... IT... DOWN."

The scientist, fascinated by his discovery, didn't pay any attention. Before Owens could grab his colleague to return him to his senses, a red bulb started flashing from the corner of the room as a shrill mechanical voice rang in the air, *'Dream disconnected. Subject waking up in ten... nine...'*

The countdown reached one just as Owens ran into the room where the test chamber was located. The hatch opened slowly, and the metal harness rose to the top. And strapped to the contraption, Terry Ives was looking like a rabbit caught in a snare inside a storm for hours.

Inside the hermetically sealed tank, she was submerged in brine, floating in the middle without any support, thereby eliminating the effects of gravity on the subject. The thick walls and dense solution snuffed out any sounds coming from outside, and the absolute lack of light reduced the burden that the environment could place on her mind. With all senses shut down, which freed her from all inhibitions, and while floating on a cloud of chemically induced trance, Terry could focus on her dream and perhaps, retain more details than she could possibly have accomplished in the outside world. *'But what is simply a dream to science, could quickly become a nightmare for humanity.'* Owens grimaced at that thought as he slowly walked towards the tank.

Terry's eyes were frantically moving around as if to find help, but it was empty save the old doctor who had just run inside. She was shaking her head and hyperventilating, unable to shout though she was desperately trying to. Owens realized that the oxygen mask was choking her as saliva blocked her throat. He quickly climbed the ladder and reached his patient. "It's gonna be alright. You just had a dream. It's not real."

He carefully undid the straps and removed the oxygen mask, allowing the frightened woman to breathe freely. Her mouth was bloodied, but it was apparently not from her intestines but from a nosebleed. If there was a hemorrhage, it could spell doom for both the mother and the unborn child. He felt deeply worried now.

Owens spoke gently to Terry, comforting her about the futility of her dreams to affect her in real life, to bring her racing heart to a normal rhythm. Finally, she calmed down a bit. And then she realized where she was as the sour brine burnt her throat. She gasped and then threw up whatever leftovers she had inside her stomach from breakfast. By that time, few more medical personnel from the facility had arrived with equipment. They would be taking over now.

"Hey, it's going to be alright." Owens gently placed his palms over Terry's abdomen to feel the baby. There was no guarantee that the child would move all the time, but Owens prayed that it would kick now, to give a sign that humanity was still not lost. "It's just a nightmare, it's not real."

"Save her. Sam! Please..." Terry pleaded as her eyes met Owens'.

"Who?"

"Jane, my daughter." She winced in pain as the medics started removing the iv needles from her arms. But then she looked into his eyes with determination and whispered, "They... will take her away..." She passed out before she could finish the sentence. Then suddenly, Owens felt a brief vibration on Terry's abdomen right under his palm.

An hour later, the conflicted physician found himself sitting in a conference room inside the facility. The other chairs in the room had been taken by scientists and doctors from the lab. At the end of the table spanning the length of the room, in front of a whiteboard, stood

Martin. He was drawing a line on the board with a black marker.

"So, this is the timeline of Terry Ives' dreams. Starting from day zero, we have the following possible dream sequences, and these are the names that she occasionally remembered from the trip." Martin wrote a series of names inside some of the bubbles coming out from the line on the board, the others remaining empty. *MKUltra* was somewhere in the middle, though no connection was yet apparent between the names.

"Scott Clark - a college grad visiting his town for vacation, Jim Hopper - an army veteran born here but away on duty, Bob Newby - an electrical equipment repairman, Nancy Wheeler - a kindergartener, Benny Sanders - who opened a burger joint recently and Martin Brenner - the guy who has no clue about any of this," Martin raised his voice as he read some of the names and banged his fist on the table behind him. His name was not on the list, but *MKUltra* was, and to the proud scientist, it was a direct reference to his own failure to keep it a secret.

"Someone tell me that you see a connection here."

The group shook their heads in silence, none of them had any clues about what could connect these seemingly unrelated people together. First there was the difference in their backgrounds, second, their ages and genders varied too wildly for them to be the masterminds of some grand plan.

"Sam!" Martin called out. But there was no response. His old colleague was apparently lost in thought.

"Sam? You hear me?"

"Ah... Yeah. Was just thinking about something." Owens shrugged.

Martin frowned and asked, "Did she tell you anything when she woke up today? About the dream?"

There was pin-drop silence in the room. The scientists were now staring at the physician tasked with finding the truth behind Terry Ives' secret, who glanced down the stack of papers kept in front of him, and after a few seconds of deliberation, replied, "No. She didn't, nothing coherent at least."

From the far side of the room, Martin was studying his friend with a piercing gaze, but there were far more critical things in the world than getting to the bottom of the nightmares of a young and scared mother.

'We both swore the Hippocratic oath, but you abandoned it!' Owens thought as he calmly met his friend's gaze, and picked up the stack of papers on the table. In this entire facility, among the thousands of research papers from the hundreds of brilliant minds that continually pushed the boundaries of human excellence beyond the conventional limits, these were perhaps the most ignored documents of all; *Terry Ives' pregnancy reports*. Yet these might be the only documents that could reveal the secret.

Their conversation today had mostly been mundane, except a statement she had given out while being pulled out from the tank. Owens recalled Terry pleading him to save Jane, but she had called him by his first name. He didn't recall giving it to her in the first place. He got up and started walking towards the door.

"Sam? Where are you going?"

"To see my patient." Dr. Sam Owens closed the door behind him and walked towards the far end of the corridor. It was time to ask Terry a different question, which would perhaps shed some light into the mysteries surrounding her.

Back in the conference room, along with the other scientists, Owens had also seen the name *'Jane'* in Terry's dream line. It was, in fact, the first name that she had ever recalled from her dreams since the nightmares started. Of course, they had searched for Jane in Hawkins and found a dozen, and unlike the others from the list, the lack of a surname had prevented them from selecting anyone. But today, Terry had finally confessed to Owens that it was the name of her unborn daughter; a critical info which he had not yet given up to the personnel from the lab. Even this piece of minute information was enough to get him into trouble if anyone in the lab ever found the concealment, but what he figured out next actually shook him to his core. He thanked his judgement as he connected the dots.

The name *'Jane,'* had appeared in Terry's visions about three weeks into her pregnancy. But Dr. Owens was a physician. He knew that the external sexual traits only started appearing in a human fetus after about seven weeks post conception. And the medical reports claimed that Terry had only found out after nine weeks. *So, how in the world did a suburban mother, beat mother nature and modern science both in their own games?* Owens thought and wanted to tear apart his medical

degree. Of course, any other academician would have dismissed the idea as sheer luck, but none of them had peered into her eyes like Owens did when she was taken out of the tank. The pain, suffering, rage, hope, and love that the doctor had witnessed in her eyes unveiled a mother who had known her daughter even before she was conceived, and had loved her since time immemorial. The scientists were all wrong, they were only trying to find a connection until the present day.

Owens reached a door with a metal nameplate that read, 'Subject Zero.' After unlocking the door, he walked inside and smiled, "Terry! Do you know what Jane would look like?"

A/N: I've always dreaded the prequel out of all the stories I had thought about when I outlined the entire plot. The fate of the entire Armageddon saga practically rests on the upcoming chapters, one small mistake here would cost me dearly later down the line. But one day or another, I had to take the plunge. There's no Stranger Things without Eleven and no Eleven without Papa. So, here we go.

This story can be read stand-alone, though it would ultimately tie in with the other books from Armageddon saga. If you're a new reader, you can check this story and if curiosity prevails (quite like Dr. Brenner), you can read the other books. So, hold on to your devices, folks. It's only going to get crazier from here.